

SALT II Treaty Institutionalizes U.S. Military Inferiority

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For The San Diego Union

Sen. George McGovern is opposed to the SALT II treaty because he feels it permits a continuing expansion of strategic nuclear arsenals on both sides. Sen. Henry Jackson is opposed because he considers it unequal and unverifiable. Both are right. SALT II neither reduces nor adequately controls the most deadly weapons on this planet.

The treaty does establish a limit of 2,250 on the number of missiles and bombers both sides may have. This will require the Soviet Union to dismantle 250 of its missiles. It provides that no more than ten independently targeted hydrogen bombs may be installed on each land-based missile. However, since SALT II allows 1,320 missiles and bombers to carry more than one hydrogen bomb, each side will be able to deploy more than 13,200 nuclear warheads.

This is the fundamental problem which disturbs critics on both sides of the political spectrum. The SALT II limits allow both sides to add thousands of additional hydrogen bombs to their strategic forces. The Soviet Union definitely plans to add more than 5,000 hydrogen bombs to its missiles. The United States could also add another 3,000 warheads without violating the treaty but in fact there will be a net decrease as a result of delays in building Trident missile submarines.

Most people understand clearly that the threat to life is not reduced if 250 missiles are scrapped while thousands more hydrogen bombs are placed in the remaining missiles and bombers. At the same time, individuals who are deeply concerned about the continuing Soviet military buildup in all areas question whether the United States really is able to know how many of the newer, smaller, more accurate hydrogen bombs are actually being placed inside the bigger Soviet missiles which could carry many more than the agreed limit.

In fact, President Carter showed how serious the potential threat of additional, hidden Soviet bombs on their missiles might be by telling the Congress that "for one Soviet mis-

sile alone — the SS 18 — the SALT II limits will mean that six thousand fewer Soviet nuclear warheads can be aimed at this country."

Senators concerned about whether we really know how many warheads are inside those and other Soviet missiles will contend that President Carter has succinctly described the enormous risk of being wrong. Successful Soviet hiding of 20 to 30 hydrogen bombs above the limit of 10 inside each of their SS-18 missiles could nearly double their power.

The United States will never launch a surprise attack against Russia. Yet, we must be able to absorb such a first strike and have enough strategic forces left to make the Soviet leadership certain that there could be no victor. Today, there is valid reason for concern about whether the combination of SALT II and current U.S. defense plans would guarantee that enough forces would survive a Soviet first strike.

Once launched, strategic missiles obey the laws of physics. That makes it possible to calculate the military effects of a Soviet attack. Assuming the Soviet land based missiles had kept to the SALT II limits of no more than 10 bombs each, they would have 840 x 10, or 8,400 independently targeted warheads for a first strike. At present, there are about 70 major military target areas in the United States.

The Carter administration calculates that by 1931 more than 95 percent of our land based missiles and bombers could be eliminated by about 3,000 Soviet hydrogen bombs. Under SALT II, that still could leave the USSR with more than 5,400 warheads on land based missiles and more than 3,300 on their submarines.

Our principal means to deter this terrible possibility has been the 656 submarine-based missiles which would still be permitted to retain up to fourteen hydrogen bombs each. At present these missiles are carried by 41 aging submarines, many of which are nearing the end of their ability to withstand the stress from the high water pressures. Current plans call for half of these submarines to be scrapped during the next few years.

Due to budget cutbacks and delays, the new Trident submarines will not bring the number of American ocean based missiles back up to current levels until 1989. In the meantime, during the dangerous years of the early 1980's, the United States will in fact have as few as 20

656 missiles. One-third of this fleet is usually in port for repairs and maintenance. Therefore, virtually our entire second strike force will be carried by only 12 submarines. If the Soviet military could also count on sinking or neutralizing most of these twelve subs, they might be able to disarm the United States in a second Pearl Harbor surprise attack.

Presidential orders to those submarines require communications satellites. The Soviet Union has already conducted many successful tests of anti-satellite weapons which could destroy those vital links. There are also about 225 Soviet hunter-killer submarines assigned the task of stalking our missile submarines. In addition, Moscow may well have duplicated our ingenious program which keeps track of their submarines.

Undersea microphones record the unique "sound print" made by submarine propellers, broadcast this to satellites which feed this to high speed computers. That makes it possible to monitor continually the location of every Soviet submarine. This technology has been publicly known for years. It is logical to assume that the Soviet Union might have matched us in this also.

With that technology, the Soviets could target ten, twenty or even more of their remaining 5,400 land-based bombs at the suspected ocean hiding places of our "invulnerable" submarines. Any one of these three Soviet systems — anti-satellite weapons, killer submarine, or missiles might neutralize most or all of our sea based missiles.

In addition, there are only about 50 important military targets outside the United States, including airbases, supply depots, aircraft carriers and the like, all of which could be destroyed with only one or two hydrogen bombs each. That would mean that of the more than 13,000 total hydrogen bombs permitted by SALT II, Moscow would have to use fewer than half to have a good chance of destroying about 95 percent of the American retaliatory forces.

Official estimates suggest that after a massive Soviet surprise attack, there might be 50 to 100 remaining missiles and 50 remaining bombers. It is highly unlikely that those bombers could penetrate the thousands of Soviet air defense missiles and jet fighters.

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Therefore, through the early 1980's, the American President might be left with some hundreds of hydrogen bombs, on tens of missiles facing a Soviet Union which still had more than 6,000 hydrogen bombs on more than a thousand ready to fire missiles. That is the prospect which frightens those who fear that this strategic imbalance might tempt the Soviet leadership into intensified political aggression in such places as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey and Latin America.

This could happen within the current SALT II limits and is by no means a worst case projection. This is the "inequality" which concerns Sen. Jackson. If, in addition, the Soviet Union cheated by successfully hiding 30 to 40 warheads inside the huge SS-18 missile mentioned by President Carter, the imbalance would become even greater. It is significant that CIA Director Stansfield Turner is not willing to assure the Congress that the United States will really be certain about what is inside those Soviet missiles.

In March, 1977, the Carter administration tried to persuade Brezhnev to accept some modest but real arms reductions. This effort was brusquely rejected. In fact, eleven years of SALT negotiations have only succeeded in establishing "limits" which permitted the Soviet military build up to continue at a rate of increase similar to Hitler's in the late 1930's.

A lesson of these futile efforts at limits and reduction is that the Soviet Union only slows down when the United States lead becomes so great, it seems impossible for them to catch up. That is what happened during the 1950's with bombers — once the United States was far ahead, Russia stopped competing and moved on to take the lead in missiles for a while. When the United States moved ahead again, Russia slowed down the building of its first generation of missiles and waited to expand until we slowed and it had mastered the new military technology.

There is strong evidence that the Soviet Union is working hard to be first with an effective anti-ballistic missile system (ABM). SALT I permits this research and development work; it also permits both nations to operate one ABM site. The Soviets

have maintained theirs, learned from it and invested heavily in further ABM development while the United States dismantled its permitted ABM site and let this technology languish. If the Soviet Union achieved an effective ABM system first, it could be catastrophic for the survival of freedom.

Now is the time for the United States to embark on a serious program of research and development to find a way to destroy an attacking missile force. This approach builds on our strategy as the defending nation. It is more humane than continuing to add warheads and uses our greatest resource which is technological innovation. An ABM system that was based on satellites and targeted against Soviet missiles during the highly vulnerable initial launch phase, would also shift verification back to the easier job of keeping track of deployed missiles.